

Proclamation

The Maternal and Child Health Leadership Education in **Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities Program** (MCH LEND Program)

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program through the University of Hawai'i at Manoa is a collaboration with community members and students to address the needs of individuals with special needs, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), and provides education and mentorship for ASD families and caregivers; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program educates our communities on the facts that autism is part of a complex group of neurodevelopmental disorders, collectively called Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) and its diagnosis is not restricted by social, religious, economic, and geographic boundaries; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program raises awareness on the delays and problems with social interactions; language; and a range of emotional, cognitive, motor, and sensory abilities associated with Autism Spectrum Disorders and the impacts or impairments they have on individuals with autism; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program recognizes that the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that autism affects as many as one in 88 children; studies over the last 12 years indicate that the prevalence of autism has dramatically increased by 289.5 percent; and the Autism Society of America estimates that the prevalence of autism could reach 4 million Americans in the next decade; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program believes that providing widespread information is necessary in order to educate parents, professionals, and the general public about autism, its effects and the critical importance of early screening in childhood; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program recognizes the important value of 'ohana, which involves caring for one another as extended family, and has embraced an 'ohana centered model in its approach to improve supports and services to individuals with special needs; and

WHEREAS, the MCH LEND Program and various autism groups in Hawai'i have found that early identification of developmental concerns allow parents to seek intervention during a crucial period of early development and are supporting an awareness effort called "Learn the Signs. Act Early";

NOW, THEREFORE I, NEIL ABERCROMBIE, Governor, and I, BRIAN SCHATZ, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Hawai'i, do hereby proclaim April 2012 as

"AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH"

in Hawai'i and encourage the families of the Aloha State to become aware of the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign and importance of screening children between 18 months and 24 months for autism spectrum disorders.

DONE at the State Capitol, in the Executive Chambers, Honolulu, State of Hawai'i, this thirteenth day of March, 2012.

NEIL ABERCROMBIE

Governor, State of Hawai'i

Lt. Governor, State of Hawai'i